

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-083994

AK-040-02-EA-017

Applicant: Chugiak Benefit Association  
P.O. Box 670015  
Chugiak, Alaska 99567

Type of  
Action: Sale of Reversionary Interest

Location: T. 15 N., R. 1 W., Section 9, Lots 16, 17, and 20, Seward Meridian, Alaska

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Preparing  
Office: Bureau of Land Management  
Anchorage Field Office  
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Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: July 15, 2002

I. INTRODUCTION

Chugiak Benefit Association (CBA) proposes to purchase the federal government's reversionary interest in a parcel of land located in Chugiak, Alaska.

In 1962, CBA, a non-profit corporation, acquired 40 acres of public land under the authority of the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act (43 U.S.C. 869). Over the years, CBA has transferred the majority of the property to the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). The property includes present day Chugiak High School and the Chugiak Senior Citizens Center. The remaining parcels, approximately three acres, are located in T. 15 N., R. 1 W., Sec. 9, Lots 16, 17, and 20, Seward Meridian, Alaska.

CBA, with the Chugiak Senior Citizens (CSC) and the MOA, approached BLM with a request to transfer title and change of use for the remaining parcel, which abuts the existing Chugiak Senior Citizens Center. Purchasing the reversionary interest allows CBA to clear title and alleviates BLM's role in long term compliance for R&PP patented lands.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

This action would facilitate the consolidation of ownership, allowing for the expansion of the senior housing and community development, located on adjacent property, currently owned by the MOA. The MOA, with the CSC, wishes to expand the existing senior citizens center to include a housing development. Purchase of the reversionary interest will enable the CBA to clear title for the land to qualify for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Grants.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

This action is in conformance with the Alaska Southcentral Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), dated March 1980. The Lands Activity Objective, L-1.1, states the following: "exchange BLM administered lands that would best suit public needs if they were administered by another federal agency, the state or a local government".

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

BLM is authorized to sell land or interest in lands under Section 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1713). FLPMA (43 CFR 2710.0-6(c)(3)(iii)) allows for Direct Sale of the Reversionary Clause – "Direct sale . . . may be used when the lands offered for sale . . . where the lands are needed by State or local governments or non-profit corporations . . ." The land is an isolated parcel, difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands, and not needed for federal purposes. The sale must be consistent

with BLM's land use planning for the area involved and the public interest will be served by the sale.

## II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

### A. Proposed Action:

CBA proposes to purchase the federal government's reversionary interest in lands described as T. 15 N., R. 1 W., Sec. 9, Lots 16, 17, and 20, Seward Meridian, Alaska, located southwest of the North Birchwood Interchange, and containing three acres, more or less. (See map in case file AA-083994.) The parcel has been appraised, and the fair market value for the reversionary interest has been determined to be \$31,649.25. The land is currently owned by CBA, but is restricted by a reversionary clause in the patent. Purchase of the reversionary interest will enable CBA to clear title for the land to qualify for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Grants. These grants have been approved, pending clear title from the BLM. Continued delay in this proposed action may postpone the project at least one year, given the limited construction season.

### B. No Action Alternative:

The No-Action Alternative is to not sell the federal reversionary interest to CBA. CBA would look to transfer title to the MOA and apply for a change of use. Should CBA be successful in acquiring a waiver for the proposal, BLM would maintain a long term compliance role, overseeing the federal interest for a senior citizen's housing complex.

## III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### A. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed action:

Air Quality  
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern  
Environmental Justice  
Farm Lands (Prime and Unique)  
Floodplains  
Native American Religious Concerns  
Threatened or Endangered Species  
Wastes, Solids and Hazardous Materials  
Water Quality, Surface/Ground  
Wetlands and Riparian Zones  
Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Wilderness

1. Cultural Resources:

The first archaeological evidence of people living in the Cook Inlet area occurs approximately 7000 to 9000 years ago. The people inhabiting the region at the time of first recorded history were Tanaina. No Tanaina villages are known for Birchwood/Chugiak, however this area was undoubtedly used by the Tanaina for subsistence activities.

Beginning in the 1890's, Non-Native settlement of Cook Inlet was stimulated by the search for gold. In 1915 the Alaska Railroad reached Ship Creek and by 1916 it had crossed Eagle River and Birchwood Station was built. The railroad provided access to the Chugiak/Eagle river area but settlement was sparse until after WWII.

An on the ground inspection for cultural resources was conducted on May 14, 2002. No cultural resources were found during the survey.

2. T&E Species:

There are no rare or sensitive plant species known to occur in the project area.

3. Subsistence:

The Proposed Action does not occur on Federal public lands as identified in ANILCA Sec. 102(3) or fall under the regulatory authority of the Federal Subsistence Board. The Proposed Action does not occupy a site of significant size or productivity to produce a sustainable surplus of any subsistence resources.

Therefore at this time, the Proposed Action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of subsistence resources, alter the distribution of subsistence resources, or limit subsistence user access from current existing conditions. No further analysis is necessary at this time.

B. Land Status:

The parcel is surrounded by private land. The parcel itself is considered private land, as it was patented under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. The federal government reserved the reversionary interest. All known interested parties have been notified.

C. Vegetation:

The project area is within the Cook Inlet/Susitna Lowlands major land resource area. Vegetation in and around the parcel has a history of vegetation disturbance from activities associated with the Senior Citizens Center and the Glenn Highway access road, and consists of paper birch and white spruce, interspersed with thick patches of alder and willow brush. Under story consists of low shrubs, forbs and grasses.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The lands are currently owned by Chugiak Benefit Association (CBA), a non-profit organization. Under this proposed action, the lands would remain in private ownership.

1. Vegetation:

Under the Proposed Action, there would be no impacts to vegetation. Once the parcel is transferred, the entire three acres of vegetation could be permanently removed due to housing and parking lot construction.

Those soil areas disturbed and not covered by housing or parking lots, could likely recolonize the first few years in weeds. Much of the adjacent areas are at different successional stages due to human influences. Each area would progress to a climax community in due time, if no other impacts would occur. The overall impacts on the integrity of the vegetation within the area are expected to be minimal and can be further minimized through weed infestation monitoring and removal.

Due to encroaching urban developments surrounding the area, weedy invasive plant species are expected to increase in the more disturbed areas.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

The lands would remain in private ownership, and be managed as a park-like setting. CBA would apply for a transfer of title and change of use. Should CBA be successful in acquiring a waiver for the proposal, BLM would analyze a proposal similar, if not identical, to the proposed action under an R&PP change of use. Should they be successful, BLM would maintain a long-term compliance role, overseeing the Federal interest for a senior citizen's housing complex and impacts to resources would be near identical to the proposed action.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

There are no cumulative impacts identified for the Proposed Action.

D. Mitigation Measures:

There are no mitigation measures identified for the Proposed Action.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted:

- ▶ Joe Beauchamp, Director  
Municipality of Anchorage  
Department of Property and Facility Management
- ▶ David Eberle, Regional Director  
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- ▶ Honorable George Wuerch  
Mayor of Anchorage
- ▶ Harvey Albright, President  
Chugiak Benefit Association
- ▶ Tom Davis, Executive Director  
Chugiak Senior Citizens
- ▶ Jennifer Haines  
Department of Natural Resources, Juneau Office

B. List of Preparers:

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